



Immediate Release

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Public alert to avoid parks treated with PCB contaminated fertilizer

(Milwaukee, WI) – The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) and the City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) are advising residents to avoid using some fenced off areas in several Milwaukee County Parks because they were treated with fertilizer that was later found to be contaminated with PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls).

PCBs were used as coolants and lubricants within manufacturing of electrical equipment for many years due to their fire resistance and insulation properties. The U.S. banned PCBs in 1977 after research showing harmful environmental and human health effects.

MMSD donated the fertilizer to Milwaukee County because it did not meet the nitrogen standards necessary to be marketed as Milorganite. The District prefers to give fertilizer away that does not meet Milorganite standards instead of sending it to a landfill.

The park areas being fenced by MMSD and posted with MHD health alert signage are located in limited sections of: Sheridan, Kulwicks, Grant and Madison Parks, within Milwaukee County.

At this time, given the preliminary information provided to the MHD, there does not appear to be an imminent public health risk associated with this event. However, the MHD and MMSD have developed signage to alert the public to refrain from use of select park sites and to avoid direct contact with soils and dirt in these areas pending further testing and contaminant remediation as necessary.

Exposure to PCBs in the environment can occur through contact with contaminated water, food or air. Dietary sources of PCB include consumption of fish, dairy products as well as poultry and red meats. Exposure to PCBs at low levels over long periods of time is associated with neurological and immune system effects. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has concluded that PCBs may reasonably be anticipated to be carcinogens.

The fertilizer was delivered to Milwaukee County on July 3 and applied to the parks on July 5. Testing on July 9 found high levels of PCBs in fertilizer being produced at the Jones Island Wastewater Treatment Plant.



It should be noted that PCB tests take 6-to-9 days to process.

The source of the PCB contamination remains unknown. District crews are investigating and monitoring the system.

MMSD is working with the MHD, WDNR and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to identify next steps for cleaning up the PCBs in the parks. The District has also quarantined tons of fertilizer at the treatment plant as a precaution but is confident that no contaminated material was made commercially available for sale.

Further PCB health-related information can be obtained on the City of Milwaukee website at www.milwaukee.gov/pcbs or by calling the Milwaukee Health Department at 414-286-3616.